

David F. Soares
521 Highland Ave.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Honorable Rob Bonta
California State Assembly
State Capitol Room 2148
Sacramento, CA 95814

April 19, 2017

Re: Support AB 1479

Dear Assemblymember Bonta,

I am writing in support of **AB 1479** to amend sections 6255 and 6259 of the Government Code relating to compliance with public records requests under California's Public Records Act. By way of background, I recently retired after serving 32 years as a prosecutor for Santa Clara County. During those years, I also served twelve terms as an executive board member of the association representing public defenders and prosecutors in collective bargaining and three terms on the county-wide association of employee organizations.

I have become aware in recent years that state and public agencies are less open in how they conduct the public's business, and less responsive to requests by citizens and the media to requests for information under the Public Records Act. This is an alarming development and a threat to our democratic form of government.

As a prosecutor, public scrutiny was always part of my job. Every time I authorized criminal charges against a person, I did so with the knowledge that I must defend that decision in a public forum, accessible to the media, before an independent judge, and ultimately subject to the unanimous verdict of 12 citizens who must agree beyond a reasonable doubt that the charge was true. In fact, one of my earliest mentors (who later served four consecutive terms as District Attorney) taught me that I should always act, even in the confines of my office, as if a reporter were taking down my every word. Throughout my 32 years as a prosecutor I welcomed the scrutiny of the public and the press, as it was how I could assure them that I was doing their business properly, without corruption or prejudice.

The penalty provisions of **AB 1479** will go a long way to assuring that public officials take seriously their duty to do the public's business in public. The great U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis once wrote that, "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants, electric light the most efficient policeman." Cronyism and corruption are on the rise with the new administration in Washington. Never before has it been so important for Californians to lead the way in resisting that tendency in our society, in order to preserve our great democracy.

Thank you for your efforts to keep California a democracy.

Sincerely,

DAVID F. SOARES
Santa Cruz